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Hints," on architecture, sculpture, and painting, by a countryman of yours, Mr. Jarvis. It appears to me to be characterized by acuteness, independence, and high purpose. On one point, however, in which I feel a deep interest, that of Pre-Raphaelitism, I am pretty confident that Mr. Jarvis speaks without any personal knowledge of the English works to which that name is applied. The tenor of his remarks is fitly applicable exclusively to German (so-called) Pre-Raphaelites, whom I should rather term would-be Raphaelites; and it is by an entire misconception that he winds up by bringing in Holman Hunt as an example of the same school. The two things are simply at the Arctic and Antarctic poles of Art. The whole system of the Germans consists in pre-conception of something that they have got to do—some system of Art to carry out, some range of subject, some range of embodiment, to conform to: the whole system of the Englishman consists in the utter rejection of all pre-conception—the determination that, beyond the primary act of inventing their subjects, and, in these, taking the entire field of what is representable (tending, indeed, far rather to our own day, than to any past religious or social epoch), they will go straight to Nature, and her alone; forget everything about classicism, and mediævalism, and revivalism, and embody their own new thoughts according to the very sight of their own extant eyes. The second book to which I referred is a "Philosophy of the Beautiful," by a divine of the Scottish Church, Dr. Macvicar; confidently and cleverly handled, but leading to little more than this—that we understand a simple development of a principle in Nature better than a complex one, and, therefore, like it the better also.

WILLIAM M. ROSETTI.

TUNBRIDGE WALLS, May 31.

MY DEAR SIR: I answer your two last questions as well as I can.

What is the origin and use of fluting in columns? The origin, I believe, was a conventional expression or imitation of the roughness of the bark of trees. But architects are not agreed on this point.

The use is to give greater energy to the vertical character of the pillar by marking it with upright lines of shadow, which are more beautiful than those of the triglyph, because continually varied (by the necessary effects of perspective, and light and shade), in apparent depth and diameter.

Your correspondent will find further observations on the subject in the chapter on "the shaft," in first volume of *Stones of Venice*.

2d. Whether is the artist's feeling or the nature he represents, of more importance in a picture?

Suppose you were looking through Lord Ross's telescope—which would you think of most importance to your enjoyment—the telescope or the stars?

The artist is a telescope—very marvellous in himself, as an instrument. But I think, on the whole, the stars are the principal part of the affair. The artist, however, is, when good, a telescope not only of extraordinary power, but one which can pick out the best stars for you to look at—display them to you in the most instruc-

tive order—and give you a mute but somehow or other, intelligible lecture on them. We thus become of considerable importance, but may always be dwarfed in a moment by the question—Suppose there were no stars? And the best artist is he who has the clearest lens, and so makes you forget every now and then that you are looking through him,

Believe me always faithfully yours,
J. RUSKIN.

P. S.—You sent me a question about the fall of Raphael. A very interesting one, but too serious to be answered in this sort of way. You will see much of what I have to say about it in the third volume of *Modern Painters*.

VOLCANIC ACTION.

(From the *Athenæum*).

At the present time, when Vesuvius is belching forth its molten floods—of which your Naples correspondent has given us so graphic a description—it may, perhaps, add to the interest which your readers take in the accounts of this sublime phenomenon that they be put in possession of a few remarks as to the true nature of volcanic action in general—the sublimity of the contemplation of which appears to me to be so vastly enhanced when we take a correct view of its real nature, namely, that the floods of molten lava which volcanoes eject are, in truth, nothing less than remaining portions of what was once the condition of the entire globe when in the igneous stage of its early physical history, no one knows how many years ago!

When we behold the glow and feel the heat of molten lava, how vastly does it add to the interest of the sight when we consider that the heat we feel and the light we see are the residue of the once universal condition of our entire globe, on whose cooled surface we now live and have our being! But so it is; for if there be one great fact which geological research has established beyond all doubt, it is that we reside on the cooled surface of what was once a molten globe, and that all the phenomena which geology has brought to light can be most satisfactorily traced to the successive changes incidental to its gradual cooling and contraction. If this one grand principle be kept in mind, all the apparently complex and perplexing phenomena which the present condition of the earth's surface presents to our contemplation disappear, and the nature of those actions which have, through a vast succession of ages and changes, given to its crust its present character and aspect, becomes comparatively simple and understandable.

And, as before said, when we behold a volcano belching forth its fiery floods, how vastly is the sublimity of the sight enhanced when we consider that in the molten lava we have before us a sample of the present condition of the interior of our globe, and also of what was the condition of its entire mass during the earliest days of its physical history!

In former times, when geological research had made but little progress, volcanic action was ascribed to some adventitious union of substances, whose combination resulted in the development of intense heat and violent eruptive action. This notion as to nature and cause of volcanic action has been long since abandoned by all those who have carefully studied the phenomena of all classes of volcanic action. Volcanic action depends on a great cosmical principle, and when rightly considered, is an expiring phenomenon—one whose vehemence in early periods of the earth's history was infinitely more tremendous, frequent and extensive than it is now, and is destined by the

lapse of time gradually to disappear as one of the active phenomena of Nature.

That the influx of the sea into the yet hot and molten interior of the globe may occasionally occur, and enhance and vary the violence of the phenomenon of volcanic action, there can be little doubt, but the action of water in such cases is only secondary. But for the pre-existing high temperature of the interior of the earth, the influx of water would produce no such discharges of molten lava as generally characterize volcanic eruptions. Molten lava is, therefore, a true vestige of the Natural History of the Creation, and, as such, is held in the most profound veneration by,

Yours, &c.,

JAMES NASMYTH.

COL. RAWLINSON has arrived in London from Bagdad, having brought to a close the excavations in Assyria and Babylonia, which he has been superintending for the last three years, on behalf of the Trustees of the British Museum. The result of these excavations have already in part reached the Museum, but the most valuable portions of them are still in transit. One hundred and fifty cases containing sculptures, inscribed tablets, terra cotta cylinders, and a very large collection of small objects of Assyrian Art, were recently unpacked at the Museum. One perfect obelisk, and the fragment of a second, are the only objects of this collection which have been yet exhibited to the public in the Assyrian Gallery; but the inscribed tablets, which amount in number, we believe, to at least 10,000, the two fine cylinders from Kileh Shergat, and all the smaller relics—which, for better security, are deposited in closed cases—can be examined by the curious. A collection of almost equal extent, and of greater value—inasmuch as the sculptures belong to the culminating period of Assyrian Art, and are infinitely superior to those which form the present Nineveh Gallery at the Museum—was shipped last month at Bussorah, and may be expected to reach the Thames in August or September; while a third or supplementary collection, composed of select specimens, the master-pieces of Assyrian Art which were disinterred from the new Palace at Nineveh during the past autumn and winter, is about to be brought to Europe, in virtue of an arrangement concluded between Col. Rawlinson and M. Place, on board the *Manuel*, a vessel which was sent out by the French Government for the purpose of bringing home the collections of MM. Place and Fresnel. Col. Rawlinson has further brought with him, overland, a single small case, containing, among other relics of especial interest, the Nebuchadnezzar cylinders, which he obtained from Birs Nimrud in the autumn of last year, and those still more valuable cylinders of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, which record the name of that monarch's eldest son, Belshazzar, the Belshazzar of Daniel. It is sincerely to be hoped that means will be found for exhibiting these slabs to the public, as soon as the whole of the three collections shall have arrived, either by a new arrangement of the present Assyrian Gallery, or by the allotment of fresh space to the Antiquity Department of the Museum. Unless, indeed, some measures of this nature are taken, the fruits of the late Assyrian Expedition, of which the labors are now brought to a close, will be lost to a great majority of the nation—the number of those who can appreciate the historical and scientific results obtained from so vast an accumulation of cuneiform materials, being, of course, comparatively few.—*Athenæum*.

THERE is to be an Exhibition at Brighton in the autumn—as there will be, soon, we hope, at every town in England, for good pictures are silent preachers in Art—very potent missionaries in the cause of Art-progress.—*Athenæum*.